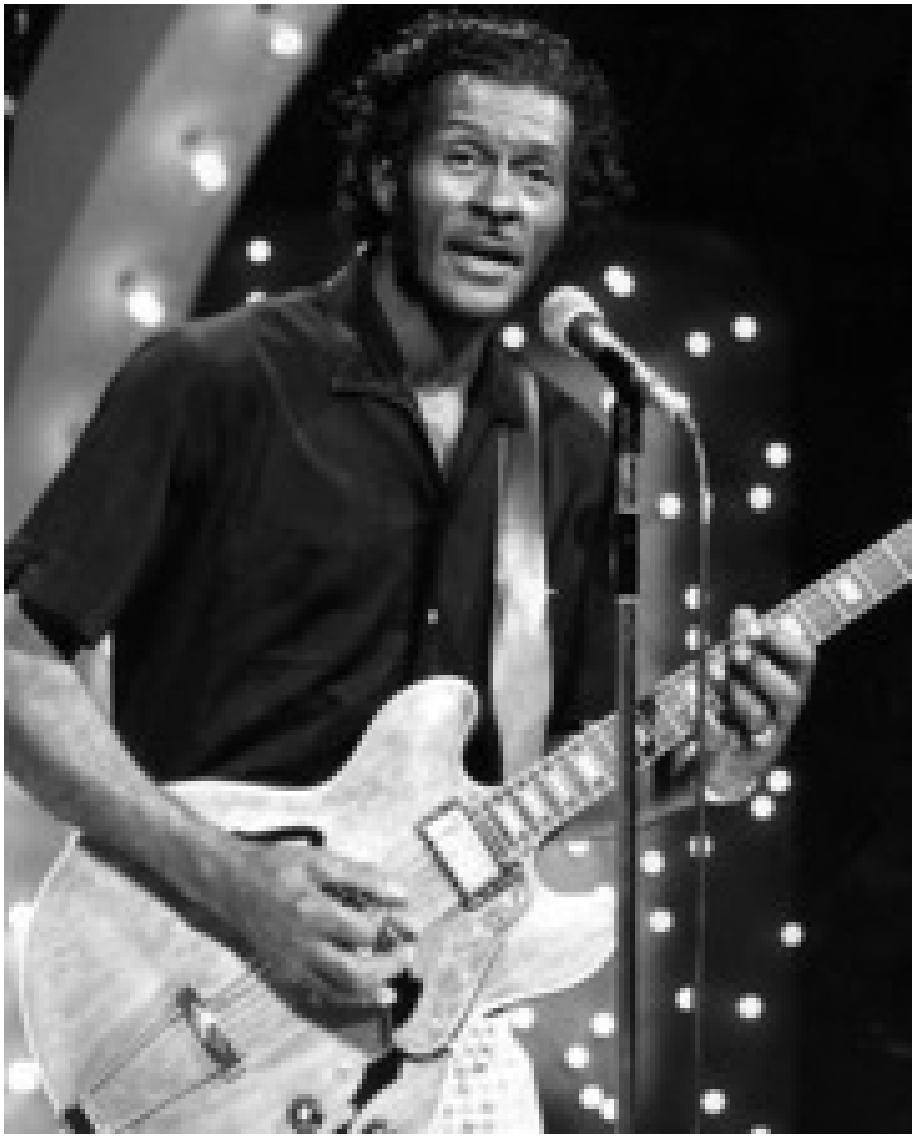
Chuck Berry (1926-2017)

By VennerRoad, 19th Mar 2017

Chuck Berry was due to bring out a new album this month, his first for thirty-eight years. Sadly, he didn't live to see its release.



Chuck Berry was already a veteran in 1973.

There are some people who appear to have been around forever: Vera Lynn turns a hundred tomorrow; the Queen of England is still going like an express train at 90; Chuck was 90 too, and had been a massive influence on contemporary music since Elizabeth II ascended the throne. Alas, on Saturday he was found at his Missouri home unresponsive; he did not recover.

Buddy Holly was killed in a plane crash on February 3, 1959, on what is now known as the day the music died. Though Holly is still remembered, Berry's music will never be forgotten; among his many achievements was becoming the first rock musician to launch a song into space when his classic *Johnny B. Goode* was included in the music aboard *Voyager* in 1977.

His influence is without parallel, for literally every song in the genres of melodic rock, heavy metal, even grunge, you may hear on the radio or the Internet has been influenced directly by Berry or someone who was influenced by him or someone who was influenced by someone who was influenced by him. Some fifteen years ago, a music website made out its list of the top ten most influential rock artists of all time: Bowie was at number 10; The Beatles were at number 1. Chuck never got a mention, but his influence on The Beatles is a matter of record, and even Bowie recorded a Chuck Berry song.

Chuck was not only a songwriter and performer but a poet and a student of human nature. In his autobiography he made a telling observation on reporters: "When I would read what I was supposed to have said, I was amazed at the difference between the niceness of the person who had asked the questions and the nastiness of the text that had been written."

Like all of us, Chuck was a flawed individual, but the obituaries have been universally kind, including of course by fellow big name musicians including Mick Jagger, Bruce Springsteen, and Ringo Starr. Tribute videos appeared on YouTube within hours of his death. In addition to his musical legacy Chuck leaves his daughter Ingrid, his son Charles Junior, and his wife of 68 years!

Watch out for a documentary or two in the near future.